

# Air Force Family Support Network

## Summer 2013 Newsletter

*Honoring Fathers  
Announcements/Articles  
Angelversaries*

June 2013, Issue 12



*Greetings Air Force Family and Friends,*

*Welcome to your Summer 2013 newsletter. As the warmest of the four temperate seasons, summer evokes thoughts of picnics, BBQs, camping, boating, vacations and general fair weather activities. The days are longer, giving us time to soak in their warmth... But as one of our family members shares, sometimes the bright sunny days are harder than the dark gloomy ones because it reminds her that her loved one will never enjoy these things again. If the same thoughts have occurred to you, you're not alone. This can serve as a reminder that your Air Force family is here for you ~ you are all here as support and comfort for each other as you continue your healing journey.*

*This edition of your quarterly newsletter specially honors and remembers our fathers as they cope with Father's Day after the loss of a son or daughter. We also talk about how mothers and fathers sometimes grieve differently, and how they can come to better understand each other. Finally, we have our recently added Angelversary section that pays tribute to your loved ones when they became angels. As always, we very much appreciate your personal submissions and great ideas. ~ Thank you and have a blessed summer.*


***Air Force Families Forever***

***"Ensuring that the families of our fallen Airmen are never forgotten by providing immediate and long-term compassionate support."***



Please know that we are not attempting to endorse any company, service or product, nor are we attempting to impose any beliefs on you. We are simply giving you options to explore as you desire.

# Facing Father's Day



It's that time of year again, Father's Day. It's hard to get excited about this day if you have had a child die. For this father, this day is more about remembering the children that are no longer with me in the physical sense.

Many of the fathers I meet that have lost children feel like they let them down as a father. They should have protected them. That's what a father does, right? Protect. We are also "fixers" and we like to fix things, but we couldn't fix the problems that were wrong with our children or the situation our children found themselves in.

Many of these dads struggle with seeing the words "Happy Father's Day." Seeing that statement gnaws at the already festering wound that has yet to heal; it's a wound that never completely heals. Over time you can get through the loss of a child, but you never get beyond it. Can you eventually get back on your feet and learn to enjoy life again? Yes. Will your life ever go back to the way it was? No. Is it possible to have a "Happy" Father's Day after a loss of a child? Yes, but for very different reasons than most people think. The happiness comes into play when you reflect on the time you spent with your child, although you wished you had more time. You're happy because it was an honor to be their dad. The love you feel inside for that child makes you smile and hurt at the same time. The happiness for these fathers does not come from a gift that was wrapped up real nice and given to them on this day. The happiness comes from the gift of being their dad.

If you know a dad that has experienced the death of a child, don't be afraid to reach out to him on this day, or any day for that matter. As difficult of a day it is, he would love to hear from you. Someone acknowledging that he is a dad, a dad that has experienced the death of a child. ~ **Grieving Dad's Project**

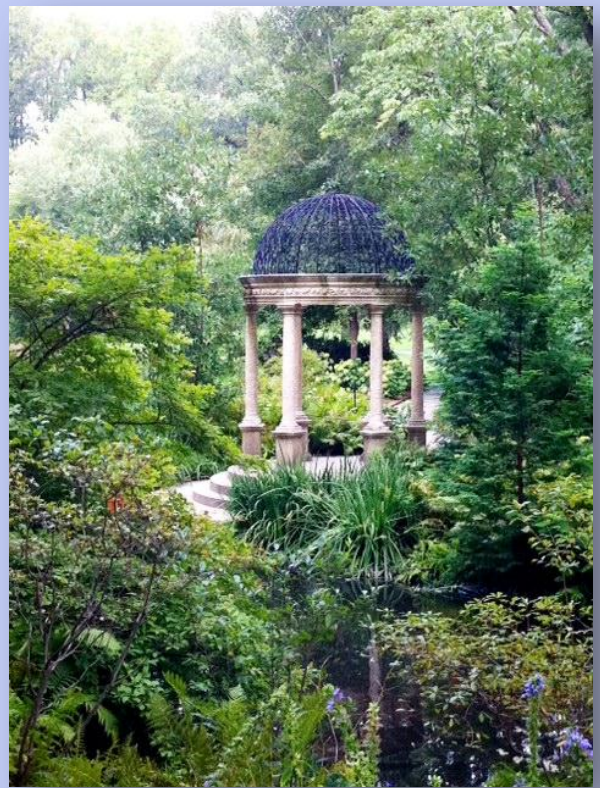
# Facing Father's Day As a Widow

*By Florence Isaacs*

**Q.** *This is the first Father's Day since my husband died, and a part of me dreads it. How can I get through it without falling apart? Is there a way to make it meaningful, not just sad?*

**A.** Gather closely your children (and grandchildren if you have them) and others who care about you and share the day. Solicit their ideas. You never know what they'll come up with. One possibility that springs to mind is a picnic in the park, where you're all nourished and surrounded by nature. If children live far away, plan the day with other family members or friends who knew your husband.

My own family usually observes Father's Day with dinner at a local restaurant. We raise a glass to my late husband. I may throw out a question to the table, something like "What do you miss most about Dad?" And we take turns answering. The idea is to dig deep and reminisce, one of the most healing activities to engage in on this holiday. This year we're considering getting together at home, which will allow us to pull out family photograph albums and pass them around. The activity also ignites any number of "remember when's" that can lead to important conversations and it also celebrate young and expectant fathers in the family. I find that everyone – whether three, 33, or older – loves to see themselves as babies, notice resemblances from generation to generation, and talk about history.



And don't forget your own father. Perfect ones don't exist, but my own father left important legacies that helped shaped the lives of my siblings and me. I want to pass those legacies on to my grandchildren. Perhaps you feel the same way and can find comfort in thinking about your dad.

Rituals like Father's Day are a cement that binds us all together. The past brings strength and understanding to the present. Yes this is a sad holiday for you, but try to keep your eye on the hope, as well. If you're alone, check out activities at your place of worship or public events that might appeal to you. Consider volunteering. Doing something for others is always good medicine. Or round up a few single women you know for a museum or a movie and a good meal. Chances are they'll be very glad you called.

**Florence Isaacs is a freelance journalist, author and widow herself.**

# UNDERSTANDING GRIEVING FATHERS

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Understanding and helping grieving fathers isn't always easy. Men usually handle emotions differently than women, and because they tend to keep their feelings inside, it is difficult to know how to help. Since grieving fathers respond to a sad event differently, their responses often puzzle mothers.

Understanding and accepting each others different ways of handling grief is important to supporting each other well. Consideration for gender differences helps to dispel the destructive effects of blame and resentment, and opens the way for a renewed, deeper relationship between grieving parents.

## Mother's & Father's Grieving Styles

Grieving Mothers often:	Grieving Fathers often:
<b>Need to talk</b>	<b>Don't want to talk</b>
<b>Cry a lot &amp; seek out support groups</b>	<b>Hide their pain &amp; deal with it on their own</b>
<b>Ask the same question again and again, hoping to find understanding</b>	<b>Don't want to know the answer, wishing they could just fix things</b>
<b>Read books on grief and write to sort out the pain</b>	<b>Disappear into the garage/basement/yard/etc.</b>
<b>Feel he should grieve her way</b>	<b>Need space to grieve their way</b>
<b>Seek understanding and hugs to feel close</b>	<b>Look for closeness through sexual intimacy</b>
<b>Need 9-24 months or more to resolve their grief</b>	<b>Make peace with their grief in 3-6 months</b>
<b>Have the impression their partners don't grieve</b>	<b>Feel their spouses need professional help after 6 months</b>

# UNDERSTANDING GRIEVING FATHERS, CONT'D

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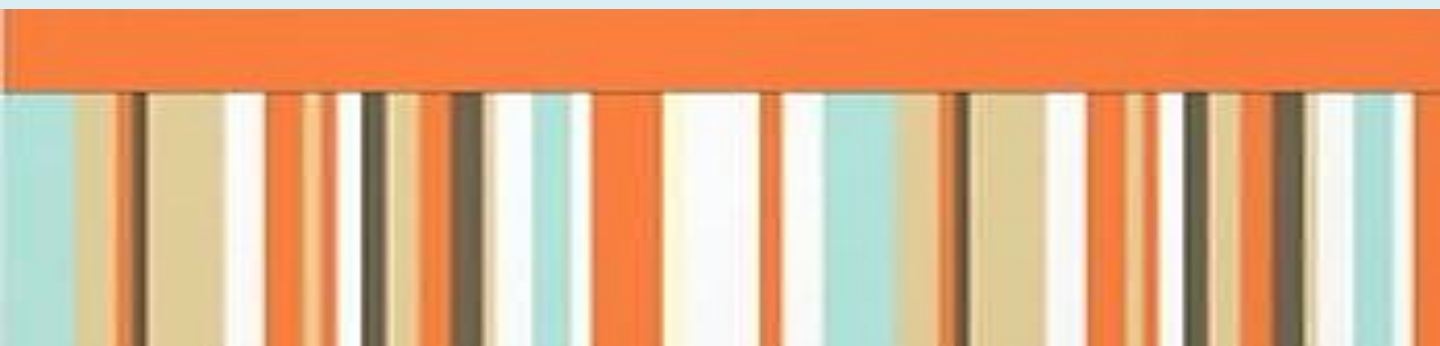
## Some typical male coping styles to deal with grief:

1. Remaining silent and keeping the pain private helps to protect against vulnerability in form of tears, strong feelings and sharing emotions;
2. Grieving secretly, when no one can see to spare others from seeing, feeling or experiencing that grief. Anything else often seems against "cultural expectations";
3. Taking physical and legal action trying to get control over a situation that is out of control. This approach is often supported and rewarded by others as it's seen as being "assertive and courageous" in times of grief;
4. Becoming immersed in activities occupying all their time so there is none left to think of the loss or feel the pain of the grief.

## Questions that might help men assess their grief process:

- Do I feel responsible for the well being of my wife?
- How much support do I find from my own resources, how much from other sources, how much from my partner?
- Is there anyone I can talk to about this experience honestly and in all its depth? How could I find someone? Do I want to find someone?
- What impact does my work have on me? Does it block my emotions or can I change my emotions through my work?
- What activity helps me connect and work through my grief?
- Do I have enough time and space to grieve?
- How do I grieve?
- What are my needs in my grief and how do I communicate them to others?

It can be very important for couples to reframe their differences as strengths to help balance each other. This enables mutual understanding and support, and often helps to make grieving a united experience.



# A Father shares his journey...

*"I look at it like my Son has another job that the Lord has him doing. I feel like part of me is no longer here, I can see Him and feel Him in the Sky, the Flowers, the Wind... and it feels so good to know that He is in good hands and will bathe in the Glory of our Lord."*

*~ Mike Hudson, Father of Michael Hudson II*



## *How we'll spend Father's Day*

Valerie (daughter) with Caden (grandson), Chris (son), David (dad), and James (son)



*"Hi, My name is Carolyn Lincoln and my sons Dad died November of last year. This will be our first Father's Day without him. My sons are 10 and 12 and were very close to their Dad. We talked about Father's Day and what would we do and how we would feel. My boys have decided we are going to go to my husband's favorite restaurant and have a Father's Day dinner for our angel in celebration of him. We are celebrating his life, since we know he is in a better place with no pain and suffering. So this Father's Day we will be celebrating like everyone else, in Honor of **Lt. Col. David Lincoln**, my son's Father."*



## Memorial to Jamie

"With spring and everything blooming, sometimes I find these bright sunny days harder than the rainy, cold, gloomy ones. Everything is growing, skies are blue, grass is green... and it reminds me that my son will never see these changes again. Last year I had a hard time with this time of year, in addition to Memorial Day weekend, weddings and graduations that bring you down memory lane. It's Jamie's birthday on June 23<sup>rd</sup>; he would be 25 this year, so I'm sure that adds to the sadness.

My sisters must have caught on to the way I was feeling last year, and one by one they brought things to me to begin a garden in Jamie's memory. My one sister brought a butterfly bush; one brought a rose bush and the other a small lilac tree. So we planted them last year. For Christmas they bought a beautiful plaque that you stake into the ground with Jamie's name on it and flowers surrounding his name. My little nieces and nephews painted rocks to put in the garden and my girlfriend designed a stepping stone with Jamie's name on it. My father bought a bench to put near it so we can sit and relax by the very special garden. I packed everything away until this spring. Once the ground thawed, I took a day off from work and worked on the garden. Everything was placed carefully in just what I thought was the right spot.

Now summer is here and things are blooming and as I look at this memorial garden, it brings me peace and a smile to my face. I see love poured into it and quite possibly feel that Jamie is growing in that garden... his spirit is there somewhere. There have been a few times that I've had my morning coffee by the garden, and there you have it, the same yellow butterfly that was visiting me all last year, hovering all over that garden. I'm smiling now as I'm writing this."

~ Rose Burroughs,

Mother of Amn Jamie Burroughs



# The Smithers/Meyer Family

~ Chief Chris Meyer, Step-father of A1C Jeremy Smithers

*"Here is the video link that ran on AFN about the 48 FSS dedicating the fitness room to Jeremy. We flew over for the ceremony and it was awesome. The base was so welcoming. The fitness center even put on a 10K run for the base in his name. We were also able to dedicate money to the high school wrestling team. Would you believe, when we lived in Italy and Jeremy was in high school, he wrestled some of the high school kids that were later seniors at Lakenheath. When Jeremy got stationed there he volunteered to help the team, and even refereed some matches. The coaches were very supportive when we lost Jeremy and came to the dedication as well."*

<http://www.lakenheath.af.mil/shared/widgets/popup.asp?url=http://www.lakenheath.af.mil/shared/xml/rssVideo.asp?mrsstype=2&id=114&cid=65&cnt=4&pos=1>



## SPARTANS!

### Montana Spartan Sprint

Bigfork, Montana, USA — 05/11/13

# Team Jeremy



# ANGELVERSARIES

## "WHEN OUR LOVED ONES BECAME ANGELS"

**Sharon:** "Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, marked the 4 Year Angelversary of Senior Airman Jessica Sheree' Tarver. I felt the rising of the anxiety of the same phone call that I received four years ago as I got closer to that day. Thank God it never came. I bought four purple balloons the night before to be released the next morning early, 6 or 7 a.m. I didn't let them go until late morning 11, closer to noon, but, I let them go. Spent the rest of the day, using gift cards that I had for several weeks, I believe that made Jess proud, because we were great shoppers together. I also spent time with friends who invited me over to a graduation celebration. I received great comfort from friends and family on my Facebook page with pictures of Jess. Each year gets better. Grief is a process, and I am going through the process better than I thought. #Blessings."

*In memory of SrA Jessica Tarver, R.I.P. 6/1/09*

**Chris & Jennifer** "On 27 May 2013, the 1st Annual Team Jeremy Memorial Event was held in honor of Jeremy J. Smithers. The events scheduled for the day consisted of a walk to the Uibly Valley Cemetery where his mother gave a brief message in honor of Jeremy, and everyone released balloons in remembrance of him. Later that afternoon, a BBQ and Golf Scramble were held at the Uibly Heights Golf & Country Club. There is a flowering dogwood tree on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole in memory of Jeremy.

*In memory of A1C Jeremy Smithers, R.I.P. 5/28/12*



# ANGELVERSARIES

## "WHEN OUR LOVED ONES BECAME ANGELS"

**Sandra:** *"Saturday, June 15, will be our 1st Angelversary. The following Saturday, June 22 would have been Emory's 26th birthday and is the anniversary of the day we brought him home to WNY from Fairchild AFB...3 flights and a 2hr drive escorted by NYS police and The Patriot Guard Riders...seems like yesterday. If I had to use one word to describe how we are feeling right now, it would be 'Heartsick'...None the less, we will roll our shoulders! June 15th we will celebrate Emory with a sunrise gathering at the cemetery with the family. Later we will spend the afternoon at a climbing gym with his sisters and brother-in-law (he loved climbing), then maybe some sushi. The weekend of the 22nd we will return to Fairchild AFB to celebrate Emory's birthday with his/our SERE family with a campout and demonstrations that they have planned for us in one of Emory's favorite places. We thank Lt Col Melzer and Charlie Flt for this wonderful invitation. The weekend will end with a 'memorial jump' that his friends at West Plains Sky Diving have planned. We thank God everyday for the blessing of family and friends. Without them, we would be lost.*

*In memory of SrA Emory Corwine, R.I.P. 6/15/12*

### Ways to Celebrate Your Loved Ones Angelversary:

**Have a celebration gathering** - Gather your family and friends and tell all those great-funny stories. It's okay to laugh, cry, and remember. Do something unique—serve their favorite foods, host a football party, go ice skating or fishing... something they loved.

**Create a memory box** - Craft stores sell wooden boxes with glass lids. Collect some of your loved one's favorite items and arrange in the memory box. Idea: Dad's baseball cap, ticket stubs, signed baseball, a photograph of the two of you at the game,,, and create a memory you'll always cherish.

**Write them a letter** - Tell your loved one where you are, that it's still hard but you're doing a bit better—or you hope to be soon. Write them letters on your birthday, their birthday, their passing day—any time you want and need to talk to them—and keep these letters together. You'll feel as if in some way they're still with you.

**Have a place to go and talk to them** - Many families choose cremation, but even those who bury their loved ones in a cemetery have the issue of trying to get back to the place to visit them. Why not donate a bench to a local park and engrave a plaque with your loved one's name on it? That way not only will you have a place to go to talk with your loved one—other people can enjoy it as well.

**Carol D. O'Dell Wordpress**



## *Air Force Families Forever*

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***For more info & past newsletters go to:***

**<http://www.mortuary.af.mil/library/familiesofthefallensupportbranch/index.asp>**